Clark County Department of
Community Development

e-News

Welcome to the Clark County Community Development e-News. We send this publication out once a month to announce the latest in what's happening. We will attempt to cover a broad range of topics that we hope will be of interest to you. We need your input! We welcome your comments about our news bulletin; and if you have topics you would like us to cover and we haven't, we'll do our best to accommodate you! ✳

School Team builds better communications with our school districts

Did you know that some of the largest developers in Clark County are school districts? Their mission may be to educate our children, but they still need buildings to do that. And since Clark County has been the fastest growing county in the state of Washington and in the Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area, there is a lot of school construction going on. In 2003 alone, school districts completed $35 million of new construction, or roughly about seven percent of all construction in unincorporated Clark County. Click here for the rest of the article. ✳

County forwards Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

The US Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration offers a program that qualifies local governments for public infrastructure loans. This program requires communities to submit a Comprehensive Economic Development Strat-

egy (CEDS). On March 16, 2004, the Board of Clark County Commissoners forwarded a draft CEDS to the federal government for certification.

The board decided to submit the CEDS because local unemployment rates are sufficiently high to qualify communities for loans. In the past, the unemployment rates in the county were so low communities would not be eligible, even if the county had an approved CEDS.

The CEDS document is actually the economic development element of the draft comprehensive plan, plus the action strategy for the comprehensive plan. The county submitted the element as its CEDS because the element contained all the material required for a CEDS. Using the economic development element for a second purpose saved the community a great deal of time and effort.

If the plan is certified by the federal govern-

ment, all cities and towns within Clark County, including unincorporated areas, will be eligible for a new source of infrastructure loans. The program is very, very competitive, but, if the CEDS is approved, communities can now compete.✳

Fee Update
Building Fees Drop for 2004

Effective March 1, 2004, new building applications submitted to the Clark County Community Development Department will see a 5.28 percent frop in fees.

The decrease in fees is the result of several factors. Development activity in 2003 was higher than expected and the department received several projects of exceptionally high value. As a result, revenue collection was higher than expected.

The department staff performed more plan reviews and inspections than projected because of the increased workload. As a result, the level of service promised to customers decreased.

The decrease in fees in 2004 will match fee levels to the type of projects now seen by the county and the increased workload. Not only will the department decrease fees, it will hire additional plans examiners, inspectors and customer service specialists to keep up with the workload.

The decrease in fees and the increase in number of inspectors reflects the department's pledge to its customers. DCD will keep fees at a level that recovers costs while also maintaining the level of service desired by the Board of Clark County Commis-

sioners.

Development Fees Rise in 2004

Effective March 1, 2004, applications for planning and engineering review will increase six percent over the 2003 levels.

Activity levels in 2003 were equal to what was expected. Revenue collection therefore was in line with projections. The planning and engineering divisions met their production timelines and level of service did not decline.

The increase in fees is the result of increasing expenses for all aspects of plan and engineering review. Everything from the cost of postage to the cost of hearing examiners increased. The budgets in these divisions were very tight in 2003, so there was very little space for accommodating additional expenses within the budgets.

The increase in fees will allow the department to maintain existing service levels and to allow new services (e.g. the 90-day review process).

Transportation Impact Fees Reflect Adjusted Index

The Board of Clark County Commissioners decided that transportation impact fees would increase each year based on a construction price index. Based on that decision, the fees rose approximately 3.5 percent on January 1, 2004.

Community Development collects transportation impact fees at the time of building permit issuance on behalf of the Public Works department. All fees are forwarded to Pub-

lic Works for road projects. DCD also collects park impact fees on behalf of the Parks Department and school impact fees on behalf of the school districts. DCD does not use any of these fees to support its operation.

Fee Levels and Costs of Review

The 1999 Performance Audit recommended that Community Development move toward a cost of service philosophy for fee levels. In 2004, the department made great strides toward this kind of fee setting.

In the Development Services and Engineering Services divisions, staff keep time sheets that allow calculation of the amount of time and cost associated with each step of the review process. When the department has 25 representative cases with complete timekeeping for a type of review, the fee is set based on the average time spent on that kind of case. Pre-applications, for example, have a fee set at $1,004 based on the time spent reviewing these applications. Other fees are set based on the division's expenses and result in a percentage increase or decrease in fees.

Development Services and Engineering Services fees support 90 percent of the expenses of these divisions. The fees also support a proportionate share of customer service, code enforcement and administration expenses.

Building fees are based on the expenses of the building, code, customer service and administration divisions in relationship to the projected number of projects and project mix for the year.

The Community Development Department does not use building, development, or engineering fees to support long range planning, several activities in code enforcement, fire marshal, or animal control. These divisions are funded by the general fund, other fees, or grants. Administration is funded by all the divisions in the department.

What do you purchase when you purchase a permit?

- Professional plan review to insure that private sector architects, engineers, and other professionals have correctly interpreted the code for your project. Errors can cost you and future occupants more money and create safety hazards.

- Inspection to assure that contractors and subcontractors have safely and accurately constructed the buildings and developed the site.

- Long term record keeping so future owners of a building can determine what was built, when, and to what specifications. That future owner, of course, could be you.

- A team of environmental experts including wetland biologists, erosion, habitat and forestry specialists who can look at your project to determine if environmental protections are sound.

- Customer service so your plans are routed between planners, engineers, fire and building staff, so you do not have to move the plans between divisions.

- Clear specifications for your devel-

opment so you know what is permissible, and so the rules, after they are determined for your project, won't be changed.

- The security of knowing that the development that goes up next to you or across the street, is held to similar standards for good construction, safety, and mitigated impacts on the environment.

- The value of a permit can be much larger than the dollars you pay for it. It is the value of knowing your site is developed correctly, that the surroundings are safe, and that the building or site when you are ready to sell will meet the standards set by most reasonable purchasers. ✷

Openings on the Animal Control Advisory Board

The Clark County Animal Control Advisory Board currently has five board vacancies in its membership positions. Clark County residents who are interested in volunteering their time to assist the animal control division on policy and ordinance development are encouraged to apply.

The open positions are for members who are Clark County residents and are affiliated as follows:

1. Member, employee, or officer in a Clark County livestock organization.
2. Member who is a facility owner/operator/employee (kennel, dog groomer) in Clark County.
3. Member at large, whether an animal owner or not.
4. Member who is affiliated as a

member, employee, or officer in a Clark County animal welfare organization.
5. Member who neither owns nor maintains domestic animals.

The advisory board consists of ten members, appointed by the Board of Clark County Commissioners. The functions of the board include:

- Reporting to the Board of Clark County Commissioners, at least once annually, on recommended modifications or additions to Title 8 Animals of the Clark County Code, and to the general operations of the Animal Control Division;
- Act as an appeal hearing tribunal pursuant to Section 8.19.080 of the Clark County Code;
- Perform such further duties as may be authorized or directed by resolution of the Board of Clark County Commissioners.

Meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. on the fourth Thursday of each month. Meeting location is currently at the Hazel Dell Sewer District. **Deadline for applications is April 30, 2004.** ✷

Strategic Planning #2

The Community Development Department identified 15 functions as background for the strategic plan update. A function is something an organization does.

The same function may take place within several organizational divisions of a department.

Functions are a useful tool for strategic planning because they let the department compare what we say is

important in the mission statement to where time is actually spent. It is a good tool for planning because it reveals where we might want to make changes in future levels of effort and provides an objective basis for measuring success.

Functions are helpful for identifying common work across divisions that might be better coordinated or where we might learn from one another.

Core functions: the activities that define the department and implement its primary mission.
Ancillary functions: functions that support the core functions.
Elective: functions performed because they create a public good or administrative efficiency, but are not absolutely essential to the mission.

Managers estimated the level of effort applied to each function. The estimate was based on the number of employees in each division and the total number of working hours generally available each year.

Managers concluded that the department is very focused on its core mission with about 59 percent of the time of the department spent in the core functions as illustrated below. Project review and inspections are the largest functions when measured by hours of effort. The ancillary functions, which are the essential support for the core functions, comprise another 28 percent of the total. Information and referral and records management are the largest support functions.

The data will help guide the strategic plan strategies as managers look at the specific activities undertaken in

Preliminary Assessment:
Core, Ancillary and Elective Functions

Core
- Inspection
- Enforcement
- Project review
- Planning
- Investigations
- Intake

Ancillary
- Code maintenance and enhancement
- Personnel management
- Records management
- Financial management
- Information and referral

Elective
- Contract management
- Public education \ public information
- Performance and quality management
- Process improvement

Level of Effort Measured by Hours

		Hours	% of total	
Core	Enforcement	20,205	8%	
Core	Inspection	41,254	16%	
Core	Intake	13,024	5%	
Core	Investigation	13,886	6%	
Core	Planning	10,384	4%	
Core	Project Review	49,826	20%	
	Core subtotal			59%
Ancillary	Code Maintenance & Enhancement	5,368	2%	
Ancillary	Financial Management	10,243	4%	
Ancillary	Information & Referral	23,901	10%	
Ancillary	Records Mgmt	23,003	9%	
Ancillary	Personnel Management	7,286	3%	
	Ancillary subtotal			*28%*
Elective	Contract Management	2,534	1%	
Elective	Education & Public Info.	18,181	7%	
Elective	Performance & Quality Mgmt	5,544	2%	
Elective	Process Improvement	6,160	2%	
	Elective subtotal			*13%*
		250,800		

each function. They also will look at each division and the similarities and contrasts between divisions in the time spent in the functions. ✳

Find newly adopted codes using Web page tab

The department improved its Web page by adding a new tab. Look for the "New Codes" tab on the Community Development Web page to find the latest adopted codes. The codes presented on this tab have not been codified by the county's ordinance maintenance firm. If you look in the county code portion of the county's Web site, you will not see these code updates.

Currently, the new code tab provides you with Title 40, the new mobile home ordinance, and the newest fee schedule.

Use the drop down menu at the top of the Clark County home page to find Community Development. The county's ordinance page also has a quick link back to the department and the new codes. ✳

New Faces

Jaime Maddy has accepted a pet license officer position in Animal Control. Jaime has an impressive background working with animals. She has served as a kennel manager, veterinary assistant, and team leader for the SW Washington Human Society. As a pet license officer, Jaime will be inspecting facilities, canvassing neighborhoods to make sure pets are licensed, and educating the public.

Jaime demonstrates her love for animals not only at work, but also in her personal life. She has two cats, Reuger and Recon, and one dog, Kizzy.

Tricia Luna has accepted the Office Assistant II position in the Customer Service Division. Tricia brings 15 years of experience in the banking industry to Community Development where she will be responsible for cashiering, answering the switchboard, and providing customer service.

In her personal life, Tricia enjoys singing karaoke, golfing, home decorating, and spending time with her family of five – husband Richard, daughter Haley, step-daughter Courtney and two cats, Quincy and KC.

Fereidoon Safdari has accepted an Engineer III position with the Engineering Services Division. Most recently, Fereidoon worked for the City of Eugene Public Works Department reviewing privately engineered public improvement projects and providing comments to land use reviews.

Fereidoon received his Bachelors degree in Mechanical Engineering from Portland State University and his Masters in Water Resources from the University of Brussels, Belgium.

Fereidoon's outside interests include hiking, volleyball, running and soccer. Fereidoon has been married to his wife, Flora, for 13 years and together they have a 7 ½ year-old daughter, Neeka. ✳

Kudos

Greg Breza will soon become one of a very few fire inspectors in the state who is a licensed pyrotechnician. "Pyros", as they are known in the industry, are licensed to shoot the big fireworks and do special effects at concerts and similar venues. Having our own pyro will help us better evaluate special events and shows that happen throughout the community.

Several times throughout the year blasting occurs to facilitate building, road development, or obstruction removal. In response to this need, **Richard Martin**, already a certified explosion investigator, completed training sufficient for him to obtain a Washington State blaster's license. Richard is now in a position to permit and approve blasting operations, evaluate post-blast documents, and make future recommendations to better protect our community. ✳

Community Development included in best practices survey

What do Fairfax County, MD, Montgomery County, MD, Phoenix, AZ, Portland, OR, San Diego, CA, , Sunnyvale CA, , Seattle WA, and Clark County ,WA have in common? All were compared in a best practices survey recently completed by the King County Auditor's Office.

The auditors picked the comparative communities based on their national reputations for progressive permitting and common development or demographic challenges. All the communities process a wide variety of permits; are attentive to customer service; have documented timeliness criteria; make permit information accessible, monitor cost information and make it available to customers.

The auditors observed that all the communities had the following best practices in common:

• Project management which could be single points of contact or case managers.
• Communication with customers involving a variety of media, showing attentiveness to customer needs.
• Expediting the review process with attention to both internal processes and the impact of processes on the customer.
• Process improvement including improvements to the performance of the permit processing, costing for permits, etc.

The auditors noted that each community addressed the specifics of their practices differently, but all attacked the same issues. The auditors concluded that success comes when a community uses a comprehensive approach and addresses all these practices.

The bottom line is that communities that help the applicant facilitate permit processing, report and hold themselves accountable for timeline goals, engage in interactive communication, and expedite reviews, are trend setters.

The report is available from DCD or the King County Auditors. ✳